

# Social Movements in Non-School Spaces: A Reflection on Educational Experiences in the Brazilian States of Pernambuco and Bahia

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**Keywords**— *Social Movements, Experiences,  
Non-Formal Spaces.*

**Abstract**— *This paper aims to describe educational experiences of social movements in non-school spaces. This is a qualitative systematic review of literature carried out through an electronic search in Google Scholar databases. The inclusion criteria were composed by articles published in the last 15 years, which had as a central theme educational experiences of social movements in non-schooling spaces, in the States of Bahia and Pernambuco. Five articles were found and included in the review in order to develop a synoptic table with their synthesis. From the analysis, it was possible to emphasize the importance and evolution of educational processes in non-school spaces in socioeconomic development, making evident the importance of bringing social movements and popular groups into the decision-making processes and educational policy.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, it is possible to verify the great contribution of social movements in the search for a more just and egalitarian society. The struggle for the recognition of alternative paths to the current societal model has led to numerous educational processes taking place in the scope of these movements, outside of school spaces, and that have become fundamental for the human formation of certain social groups. Some policies were born exactly from the experiences of these movements, as is the case of the National Policy for Rural Education – or *Política Nacional de Educação do Campo* (PNEC, 2010).

To talk about education in non-formal spaces is to grant protagonism to a set of social practices that are

essential for citizenship. It is to refer to educational processes that take place outside the institutional scope of the school and that are born with an educational purpose, but that are not curricular.

Gohn (2014) presents a reflection on the production and transmission of knowledge outside institutional contexts of education, pointing out that non-formal education is that which is learned "in the world of life" through processes of sharing experiences, mainly in daily collective actions and spaces. She also shows that, at the same time, it tries to understand how new practices, coming from both civil society and political society, in the field of associativism and public policies, enter into non-formal education processes, affirming that these are participative processes in popular movements, non-

governmental organizations, and other civil entities (foundations, associations, cooperatives, etc.), challenged to promote a citizen, participative, and emancipatory education.

In this premise, Néspoli (2013) brings a discussion about the experience of the Youth and Adult Literacy Movement in the city of São Paulo, or *Movimento de Alfabetização de Jovens e Adultos* (MOVA/SP, 1989-1992) – program implemented by the educator Paulo Freire when he was municipal secretary of education of the city of São Paulo/SP – seeking to analyze Freire's contributions to the construction of a transforming education in the context of contemporaneous Brazil. He also points out that Paulo Freire sought to introduce a profound change in relation to the way education was being managed in the country and, to this end, based his administration on a policy of popular participation. It was based on these conceptions that the MOVA-SP was born.

With these initiatives becoming more and more constant, what used to be delegated only to the formal school environment, now has non-school learning spaces - not opposing the school, but expanding its horizons (Ferreira, 2014). It is noted, however, that there are few studies addressing the problem of social movements in the context of Brazilian education, especially from a more regionalized perspective (Rodrigues & Tamanini, 2012).

In this sense, the objective of the present study is to identify and describe educational practices in non-formal spaces, developed within the scope of Social Movements in the Brazilian states of Bahia and Pernambuco. To do so, the article is structured as follows: initially, the formal, non-formal and popular education environment is objectively discussed, and then the social movements for education. After that, the methods used for the search and selection of the articles analyzed are presented. Finally, the results are presented as a summary of the analyzed articles and a discussion, drawing, as much as possible, a parallel between the works and the theoretical foundation.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Formal, Non-Formal Environment and Popular Education

Education is understood as a complex phenomenon, composed of various aspects and contextualized in diverse cultures and philosophies (Gadotti, 2012). Another intrinsic aspect of education is its ability to adapt to the most different scenarios: the technological environment, for example, brought with it the need to adapt the teaching-learning process and drove the emergence of

Distance Learning (DL), as it is popularly known (Costa, Schaurich, Stefanan, Sales, & Richter, 2014).

When discussing this topic, it is common to think, first of all, of the "classic" formal environments, such as schools and universities. However, for Rodrigues and Tamanini (2012), education can - and should - be understood beyond the curricular dimensions, breaking the barrier of the school walls and reaching the spaces of home, leisure, work, and even associativism.

Gomes and Silva (2019) approach education as a living and dynamic process, present in all places, spaces, contexts, relationships, knowledge, and doings. And the Brazilian Law of Directives and Bases of National Education itself presents a similar perspective by pointing out that education "embraces the formative processes that are developed in family life, in human coexistence, at work, in teaching and research institutions, in social movements and civil society organizations, and in cultural manifestations" (Lei 9.394, 1996).

So, in a context of absence and failure of the State - this, which should promote justice, equality and dignity to all citizens - the concept of non-formal education arises, which consists precisely in breaking the barrier imposed by the formal environment (Gomes & Silva, 2019). In comparison with formal education, Gadotti (2012) explains that non-formal education is more diffuse, less hierarchical and less bureaucratic. For the author, also, non-formal education should not be defined considering the formal school structure as the only paradigm.

According to Gohn (2011), a major characteristic of this educational aspect is intentionality. In other words, non-formal practices present systematization, organization, and objectives (Ferreira & Medeiros, 2012), which is far from the idea of amateurism and spontaneity.

It is also worth highlighting the concept of popular education, which, although it may refer to the same disciplinary area, is not synonymous with non-formal education. As pointed out by Gadotti (2012), popular education seeks to respect the common sense that popular sectors bring with them in their daily lives, problematizing it and incorporating a more rigorous and scientific reasoning. It was born, however, like non-formal education, outside the walls of the school institution and the spaces of official legitimization of education (Rodrigues & Tamanini, 2012).

If on the one hand the educational panorama is diverse and unequal in the same proportion, on the other, society and social movements constantly demand new actions that involve the public and private sectors (Rodrigues & Tamanini, 2012). Thus, it is valid to emphasize that the

field of non-school education is still full of obstacles to be overcome.

For Saul (2014), one of the great challenges is to combat the prejudice against education developed in non-formal spaces, which is often assigned welfare characteristics and, therefore, ends up not receiving the proper attention from the government. In turn, Santos and Oliveira (2014) present a series of challenges of the non-school environment, such as: the overcoming of the school as the only reference of the pedagogical space and the teaching-learning model; the development of the educational practice paying attention to the situation experienced by the student (health condition, crisis, medical impediments, and individual motivations, for example); the acceptance of age and cultural differences and respect for the other's limitations; the establishment of dialogical and solidary interpersonal relationships; facing the new and the construction of new educational references, among others.

Despite the difficulties, a scenario of significant advances is perceived, with the expansion and strengthening of pedagogical practice in structured spaces within the concept of non-formal education (Ferreira & Medeiros, 2012), consolidating various non-school environments, such as museums, workshops, cultural centers, foundations and non-governmental organizations (Rodrigues & Tamanini, 2012).

The case study by Santos and Oliveira (2014), for example, presents a pedagogical experience in a hospital environment. For the authors, practices like this have become increasingly common in Brazil, being developed especially by non-governmental educational institutions or those linked to popular education and that consider the non-school environment as a way to ensure access to knowledge for the popular classes.

It is impossible to approach educational processes in non-formal spaces without mentioning the work of Paulo Freire, who, throughout his trajectory, presented the importance of a vision beyond the school walls - being recognized nationally and internationally for the direction of his studies. In this sense, Gadotti (2012) points out Freire's main contributions to the discussion and implementation of Popular Education as: the recognition of the legitimacy of popular knowledge, the defense of education as a practice of freedom and a precondition for democratic life, the harmonization between the formal and the non-formal, and the theorization of practice before transformation (and not the other way around).

Paulo Freire's work is also very close to social movements, as Stênico and Paes (2017, p. 54) point out, since they have "an educational character, not simply

because of the condition of exclusion, but by understanding the reason for their condition of oppression that leads men to engage in the social struggle," strengthening the fight for equal rights and access to education, whether in formal or non-formal spaces.

## 2.2 Social Movements for Education

The literature covering non-formal education carries with it an almost intrinsic relationship to social movements. Gadotti (2012), for example, shows that non-formal education used to be linked to non-governmental organizations, unions and social movements, often organized in opposition to the educational methods imposed by the State.

Discussing non-formal education is also discussing the actions of social movements in the struggle for the exercise of citizenship (Ferreira & Medeiros, 2012), since, in this field, the aim is to achieve the path to the construction of citizenship, transforming both professionals and students into "subjects of law" and seeking individual and collective social well-being, autonomy, and citizenship (Santos & Oliveira, 2014).

Social movements, throughout the history of Brazil, have been interfering positively in the educational context, articulating educational processes and community (Rodrigues & Tamanini, 2012). According to Ferreira (2014), these movements began in the 1960s, with the support of populist politicians, such as the Basic Education Movement (*Movimento de Educação de Base*, MEB), the You Can Also Learn to Read by Standing on the Ground (*De Pé no Chão Também se Aprende a Ler*), and the Popular Culture Movement of Pernambuco (*Movimento da Cultura Popular de Pernambuco*, MCP).

The Basic Education Movement (MEB), for example, followed Paulo Freire's methodology and implemented distance education via radio, working on literacy and training courses for communities. The Popular Culture Movement of Pernambuco (MCP) also carried out educational practices via radio through experimental schools (Ferreira, 2014).

At least in the context of education, Social Movements arise from specific needs and, throughout their actions, they strengthen long-standing struggles - such as the cause of teacher strikes, for example - and it is mainly in these aspects that their importance lies. As Dalmagro (2016) explains, the actions of educational Social Movements are based on the questioning of social structures and the education that comes from them, which provides an education "for the new as far as they concretely point to this new" (p. 87).

### III. METHODOLOGY

In order to carry out a qualitative systematic review of the research developed on the research object proposed in this article, we chose to use an inventory and descriptive methodology, typical of the works known as the state of knowledge (Ferreira, 2002).

Considered as a tool that enables the mapping and generation of "different indicators of treatment and management of information and knowledge, (...) necessary for planning, evaluation and management of science and technology, of a specific scientific community or country" (Guedes & Borschiver, 2005, p.15), the state of the art constitutes an essential part in the process of understanding science and, when such analysis is added to qualitative research, the results acquire a greater range of interpretation (Cardoso, Mendonça, Riccio, & Sakata, 2005).

The systematic literature review, according to Souza, Silva, and Carvalho (2010, p. 103), is "a rigorous synthesis of all research related to a specific question," using a set of systematic methods throughout the process - identification, selection, and evaluation of studies.

The corpus selection criteria followed the procedures used by Vieira (1998), Tonelli, Caldas, Lacombe and Tinoco (2003), Sampaio and Perin (2006), and Cassundé, Oliveira, Alencar, Rodrigues e Rodrigues (2017), as indicated in **Table 1** (in the appendix).

We included works published between 2005-2020, indexed in scientific journals or annals of events, which had as their central theme the educational experiences of social movements in non-school spaces, in the states of Bahia or Pernambuco. We excluded all articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria, that is, those published more than 15 years ago, those that were not indexed in scientific journals or in annals of events, and those that were not contextualized in the states of Bahia and Pernambuco.

Throughout the study, some steps were followed: initially, the articles were selected based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria; then, they were read in order to build a solid theoretical basis about the educational experiences of social movements in non-school spaces so that, based on Bardin's Content Analysis method (2011), it was possible to formulate an argumentation about the theme and seek directions for the expansion of these activities; finally, a summary table was prepared with the main information about each selected article, which served as a basis for the discussion.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results interpret and discuss the relationships between the findings of the search and the theme addressed. So, in this section the results and discussions of this article are presented, and in order to provide the reader with a basic initial overview of the selected papers (refer to **Table 2** in the appendix) presents the respective authors, years of publication, titles of each analyzed paper and, briefly, the objectives of the mentioned articles.

The article by Carvalho and Santos (2020) is focused on rural education and analyzes the National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform (*Programa Nacional de Educação na Reforma Agrária, Pronera*) within the scope of the UESB - University of Southwestern Bahia, an initiative that has become a public education policy and that serves individuals coming from the areas of Agrarian Reform. The study identifies that Pronera contributes directly to the formation and socialization of rural subjects by means of professional and academic training.

The authors mention that this program, after it starts, worked as a government policy and then as a State policy - that is, of a permanent nature. This is an aspect worth emphasizing, considering that many initiatives have potential, but end up losing strength with changes in government. Thus, the importance of transforming such educational practices into State policies is clear.

The article by Hora Filho and Marques (2015) is contextualized in the context of Youth and Adult Education in Recife/PE - more specifically in the ProJovem Urbano. The work is conducted in a very interesting way, even showing factors that, in the context, led to school dropout. Another point that draws attention is the analysis of the contexts in two different neighborhoods in the same municipality, since each may have its inherent characteristics and other peculiarities.

Chaves et al. (2014) report the experience of MobilizaSUS, an initiative that seeks greater approximation and dialogue with social movements, from an initiative put into practice in the form of the course "Popular participation, social movements and the right to health". As a result, the authors report the exercise of protagonism of representatives of social movements, as well as the construction of strategies for the incorporation of demands and needs of the collective.

In the sequence, the work of Souza (2007) is contextualized in Pernambuco's capital, Recife, during the Popular Culture Movement (MCP) and the Social Promotion Foundation (FPS), when the radio - an important means of communication at the time - was used to carry out educational practices. The authors draw attention to the importance of this experience for the



construction of the history of education in Pernambuco. The way it worked was similar to today's distance learning colleges: the student had to go to a school where the classes would be given via radio.

Finally, the article by Tavares (2015) was analyzed. The work focuses on Popular Education and Paulo Freire's theory, directly addressing the campaign You Can Also Learn to Read by Standing on the Ground (*De Pé no Chão Também se Aprende a Ler*), in Natal/RN, and other important social movements for education. Although the aforementioned campaign is not contextualized in Pernambuco or Bahia, the author also addresses social movements and the Popular Education discourse in Pernambuco.

Analyzing all the articles, it becomes evident the great diversity of experiences and practices, in addition to the interdisciplinary and intersectoral character, since the pedagogical practices addressed have different natures and are contextualized in different areas. This corroborates the idea of Gadotti (2012) of plurality intrinsic to popular education.

It was also found the possibility that non-formal educational practices are formalized over time, corroborating the thought that social, popular and community education can be executed outside the formal scope and, even so, continue to be formal - considering the scientific rigor, objectives, regulation and certification (Gadotti, 2012). As an example, we mention the Agricultural Family School and the Itinerant Schools of the Landless Movement (*Movimento Sem Terra*, MST).

It is worth noting that it was not possible to identify any author network - that is, the authors and co-authors of the analyzed articles are not shared and are not repeated among themselves. This shows that, although important and necessary, the studies presented are sporadic, and not continuous research. Furthermore, they show the inexistence of study networks, whether groups or research projects that aim to analyze and evaluate this type of initiative.

In this sense, therefore, it is essential to establish a study agenda that seeks to investigate and analyze the educational practices in non-formal environments, especially in the context of the Northeastern semi-arid region - a region that presents high rates of illiteracy and other inequalities as a result of educational public policies implemented wrongly or erroneously over the decades.

## V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This analysis made it possible to emphasize the importance of educational processes in non-school spaces

in socioeconomic development not only in the national, but also in the regional context. This happens especially because such educational practices leverage the schooling process, even without a curricular function, as seen in countless youth and adult programs developed by governmental and non-governmental institutions, as well as strengthen other social practices, such as human rights, housing, and agro-ecological practices, making it possible to say that the result of these processes, which have their roots in the organized action of social movements, has effectively played a fundamental role in the process of Brazil's socioeconomic development.

The analysis also shows that there is an evolution within these educational processes in non-school spaces, because if it's made an analysis of these processes by two decades ago, it can be seen that these movements had a role much more linked to claiming demands for rights that were not guaranteed within the Brazilian social/educational policy. It was precisely these educational processes, the social organization, the struggle within these movements that made it possible to notice a change in this picture over the last two decades.

In this way, movements that in the past were in the condition of claiming rights, today occupy spaces in decision-making processes within the state policy. This implies saying, for example, that many agendas that in the past were demands, today are presented as public policy, as is the case of Rural Education, where it is possible to notice that, from 2002 to the present moment, it has presented a significant evolution in the offer and guarantee of this right.

In Bahia and Pernambuco, this situation consolidates the perspective that is presented throughout Brazil and, in this sense, it becomes evident the importance of taking social movements and popular groups into the decision-making processes and into the educational policy, just as Paulo Freire did when he took over as Secretary of Education in São Paulo. This implies placing the subjects as protagonists of their own rights, and this was a significant advance that occurred as a result of this political training.

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### Appendix

*Table 1 - Criteria for corpus selection*

Time cut-off	Last 15 years (2005-2020)
Describers	Educação não-formal, movimentos sociais, Permanbuco, Bahia
Database	Google Scholar

**Font: Elaborated by the authors (2021).**

*Table 2 – Articles selected for the corpus of this systematic review*

AUTHORS	YEAR	TITLE	OBJECTIVE
Carvalho, M. S., & Santos, A. R.	2020	Pronera as a public educational policy at the University of Southwestern Bahia - UESB	To analyze the National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform (Pronera) as a public educational policy implemented at the University of Southwestern Bahia (UESB), demonstrating the implications and consequences undertaken by the State model for the individuals who are benefited by this educational strand.
Hora, E. A., Filho & Marques, F.	2015	Educational practices in ProJovem Urbano in Recife/PE: differentiation, locational factors and problems in the neighborhoods of Brasília Teimosa and Ibura	To develop an approach on the pedagogical practices and problems of the ProJovem Urbano. Making a differentiation on the locational perspective between the neighborhoods of the RPA6 of Recife-PE, more specifically the neighborhoods of Brasília Teimosa and Ibura. Through the view of locational factors and the dynamics of existing relations in the communities and their social processes, it intends to expose the difficulties of the educational process in youth and adult education, which is configured as an Urban Social Movement.
Chaves, L. et al.	2014	Course "Popular participation, social movements and the right to health": an experience of popular education in Health in Bahia from MobilizaSUS	Strengthen the performance of social movements in the political arena of health in Bahia.
Souza, K. F. B.	2007	Radio and Educational Practices in Recife in the 1960s	To demonstrate the use of radio as a resource to promote education in Recife in the sixties.
Tavares, M. T. G.	2015	Popular education and contemporary social movements: some notes for reflection	To reflect on Popular Education in contemporary times, thinking about and deepening questions related to its role in the current situation of Brazilian society, especially in social movements.

**Font: Elaborated by the authors (2021).**